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[Review of] Maureen Junker-Kenny, Approaches to Theological Ethics: Sources, Traditions, Visions

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Maureen Junker-Kenny, *Approaches to Theological Ethics: Sources, Traditions, Visions*, T&T Clark: London, 2019; 268 pp: 978-0-5676-8296-3/95-6, £24.99 (pbk).

Addressing the relationship between different sources and traditions of Christian ethics, this book may interest university students with prior grounding in the subject. Although Junker-Kenny writes from a broadly Roman Catholic perspective, her approach is distinctive in incorporating hermeneutical insights from recent German philosophy and theology. These may guard against naïve responses to complex issues but sometimes seem to crowd out core material and distinctions. The book is offered as the fruit of 25 years teaching theology and religion and indeed reads like a distilled lecture course.

Part One, on sources, covers Scripture, tradition, the human person and science. Scripture is treated ecclesially, as God's Word and as testimony, and distinctions in how different biblical books treat ethics are mostly elided. Tradition is expounded with reference to doctrine, mostly via contemporary German sources, and the reader is left to reflect on ethical implications. The chapter on the human person ambitiously encompasses Aristotle, utilitarianism and deontology, before moving to Ricoeur on self and other. This is a lot of ground to cover in twenty pages: interesting connections are made but readers will need to go elsewhere for developed expositions of any of these thinkers or theories, or engagement with key secondary literature. The chapter on science presents the 'array of distinct disciplines, encompassing both the natural sciences and the humanities' (p. 61) as the fourth source of theological ethics. However, disciplinary integrity may be better preserved if these disciplines are allowed to inform theological ethics rather than counted among its sources.

Useful critical connections are drawn in Part Two, on traditions, which comprises chapters on virtue, liturgy, natural law, autonomy and feminism. Virtue is presented not just via Aristotle and Hauerwas but as an interpretive framework for Pauline and early Christian ethics. Attempts to ground ethics liturgically are subjected to appropriate critique for their tendency to endorse existing ecclesial polity and preclude rational interrogation. It might be added that such exercises rarely engage liturgical history, instead projecting current Christian mores onto the liturgy and thereby instrumentalizing it. In treating natural law, Junker-Kenny rightly emphasises social and justice imperatives against the tendency to endorse the status quo. Autonomy is helpfully situated within the natural law tradition, aided by a lucid discussion of maxims as subjective principles. Feminism is rightly presented as calling into question elements of mainstream Christian ethics. New imperatives include giving more attention to the theory of the self, promoting care and solicitude alongside justice, and honouring real bodies rather than exalting idealized bodies via technologized quests for bodily perfection.

In adjudicating competing visions, Junker-Kenny prefers David Tracy's model of theological ethics interacting with university, church and society to sometimes triumphalistic church-based understandings, as well as to constructions grounded in a praxis that may occlude transcendence. Pleasing multiple publics and readerships is usually difficult and she is to be thanked for her significant effort to promote dialogue.

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